

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE ABROAD

In the Midst of War and Revolution

MAURICE J. GOLDBLOOM

FROM its inception, the American Jewish Committee regarded the protection of Jewish—and human—rights throughout the world as its primary function. Louis Marshall wrote in a letter to Henry W. Pollock in 1911: "The American Jewish Committee was organized some five years ago immediately after the massacres at Kischinev, Odessa and other localities in Russia, for the purpose of establishing a medium whereby the Jews of America might come to the assistance of their suffering brethren in other parts of the world." In seeking to place the resources of the rapidly growing American Jewish community at the service of the persecuted and poverty-stricken Jews of less fortunate parts of the world, the founders of the Committee were acting in accordance with the enduring Jewish tradition of mutual aid, which had been one of the bases of Jewish survival through the ages. Thus the Jews of the Ottoman Empire had succored their brethren who were driven from Spain, and also enlisted Ottoman diplomatic support to ease their lot in a number of ways. In more recent times, the Jews of Western Europe had helped those who came as refugees from Russian persecution and those in the Near East who were endangered by the breakdown of Turkish power.

But the increasing scale of aid required

IN THIS companion article to Oscar Handlin's story, in the January COMMENTARY, of a half-century of accomplishment by the American Jewish Committee, MAURICE J. GOLDBLOOM reviews the multifarious activities of the Committee in protecting Jewish and human rights everywhere in the world. This past year, as our readers know, the Committee has been celebrating its Fiftieth Anniversary. Mr. Goldbloom, a former editor of the Foreign Affairs department of the American Jewish Committee, and a regular contributor to COMMENTARY, is the author of *American Security and Freedom* (1954).

by modern conditions, the frequency and variety of emergencies, no longer could be handled by the individual action of great philanthropists or by small groups which arose in response to a particular need and disbanded when it had been met. In England, the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Anglo-Jewish Association had long since placed international rescue work on a more permanent and formal basis. In France, the Alliance Israélite Universelle had been founded in 1860 with the aim of mobilizing the resources of the international Jewish community. But while it succeeded in enlisting some distinguished leaders from other countries—Louis Marshall, for instance, was a member of its executive committee—it nevertheless remained a predominantly French organization. American Jews, as their numbers grew, clearly required an organization of their own to fulfill their international responsibilities. This became very clear after Russian anti-Semitism graduated from a chronic evil to a major instrument of Czarist policy. The Kishinev pogroms, and the others which followed, showed that action to relieve the victims was not enough; a continuous fight against pogroms and discrimination, wherever they might occur, was essential.

In its first years, the American Jewish Committee aided not only the victims of pogroms and discrimination in Russia and Rumania, but those who were afflicted by fire in Constantinople and famine in Persia. The heavy demands created by the outbreak of the First World War, however, made it appear desirable to separate the relief activities from the Committee's other functions, and to entrust them to an organization specifically designed for the purpose. Hence in October 1914 the AJC took the initiative in establishing the American Jewish Relief Committee, to which it turned over \$100,000 that it held in its treasury as a special relief fund. Subsequently, the American

Jewish Relief Committee merged with an Orthodox group, the Central Jewish Relief Committee, and the Socialist and labor People's Relief Committee, to form the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. Thereafter the American Jewish Committee continued to assist Jews in other countries in meeting cultural, communal, and political problems, but it no longer engaged in relief work in the strict sense.

FROM the very first, the American Jewish Committee emphasized that the rights it asked for Jews were basic human rights, not special "Jewish rights," and that it wished to secure these rights for all. On this basis, it sought and usually received the support of the American people as a whole in its campaigns to secure these rights. The Committee also believed that the first requisite for remedying any evil was full public knowledge of the facts. It therefore systematically supplied the American press with all available information on the situations existing in Russia and Rumania, as well as other areas where serious problems developed. And when, in 1909, the American press failed to carry news of large-scale repressive measures taken against the Jews of Finland by that country's Russian rulers, the Committee looked into the matter and discovered that the Associated Press was dependent for its Russian news on the official Russian press agency, which was more interested in suppressing the facts than in communicating them. The Committee brought this situation to the attention of the officers of the Associated Press, which then established its Russian bureau on a completely independent basis.

While the Committee's activities extended to many parts of the world even in its earliest years, Russia for some time continued to engage its greatest interest. Russian anti-Semitism had been the catalyst which had brought the AJC into being, Russia was the great international bastion of anti-Semitism—and half the Jews of the world lived within Russia's boundaries. The struggle against Russian despotism had many facets, for the Committee recognized that the anti-Semitism of the Czar's government was inextricably entwined with the entire character of that tyranny. It therefore worked to preserve the right of asylum for political

refugees from Russia; in the case of two non-Jewish fugitives, Jan Janoff Pouren and Christian Rudowitz, the Committee took an active part in the legal fight which succeeded in preventing their extradition on trumped-up charges of murder and arson. American Jews were directly affected by the refusal of the Czar's government to recognize the passports of foreign Jews and admit them to the country. This Russian policy, insofar as it applied to American citizens, was a clear violation of the terms of the treaty of commerce and navigation with the U. S. In 1893 Secretary of State James G. Blaine protested in a note to Russia: "It is not constitutionally within the power of this Government or of any of its authorities to apply a religious test in qualification of equal rights of all citizens of the United States; and it is therefore impossible to acquiesce in the application of such a test, within the jurisdiction of the United States [i.e., by Russian consular authorities on American soil], to the impairment of the rights of any American citizen or in derogation of the certificate of this Government to the fact of such citizenship." But in 1907 another Secretary of State, Elihu Root, reversed American policy by issuing a circular stating that because of Russian policy "this Department will not issue passports to former Russian subjects or to Jews who intend going to Russian territory, unless it has assurance that the Russian Government will consent to their admission." When Louis Marshall, on behalf of the AJC, protested to Secretary of State Root against this official differentiation between Jews and other American citizens, he was informed that the circular had been withdrawn and another substituted. The new circular made no mention of Jews, but warned that "Under Russian law a Russian subject who becomes a citizen of another country without the consent of the Russian Government is deemed to have committed an offense for which he is liable to arrest and punishment if he returns without previously obtaining the permission of the Russian Government. This Government dissents from this provision of Russian law, but an American citizen formerly a subject of Russia who returns to that country places himself within the jurisdiction of Russian law and cannot expect immunity from its operations." When

Marshall pointed out that this was in violation of provisions of American law which asserted the natural right of expatriation and guaranteed the full support of the United States government to its citizens abroad, whether they were native born or naturalized, the State Department agreed to withdraw this circular also.

But this still did not solve the question of Russian discrimination against American Jews. The AJC pointed out that this was not a "Jewish question" but an American question—that of the respect due to an American passport under the terms of the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation between the two countries. (In the course of the discussion, it transpired that Russia also refused to permit the entry of foreign—including American—Catholic priests.) The Committee's position received wide public support, and under the pressure of public opinion the Taft administration sought unsuccessfully to secure a change in the Russian position by negotiation. In December 1911 both houses of Congress passed resolutions calling for the abrogation of the existing treaty, since Russia was persistently violating it by denying to some American citizens the rights she had promised all. In the House of Representatives there was only one dissenting vote; in the Senate the vote was unanimous. In the face of such overwhelming sentiment, the administration could no longer hold back, and a few days later President Taft officially notified Russia of the cancellation of the treaty. Even then the Russian government did not yield; as a result there was no treaty of commerce and navigation between the United States and the Czar's government during the remaining years of that regime's existence.

The Committee found itself once again ranged against the Russian government when the latter instituted a ritual murder prosecution against an obscure Kiev Jew, Mendel Beilis. Nothing could be better calculated to arouse every Jew, wherever he might live, than the revival of this ancient canard which had caused the shedding of so much Jewish blood throughout the centuries. When in 1840 the French consul in Damascus had, with the backing of his government, used the charge to persecute the Jews of that city, Adolphe Crémieux and Sir Moses Montefiore had aroused the

whole civilized world to protest and secured the release of the surviving victims. Now the charge was again being raised, and again a shocked world rallied to the defense of the accused. In the United States the American Jewish Committee helped to arouse public opinion. At its suggestion Christian church bodies passed resolutions denouncing the libel against the Jewish religion, and leading Protestant and Catholic churchmen petitioned the Czar to withdraw the charges. The Russian government, to which the ritual murder prosecution was a planned step in the incitement of pogroms, nevertheless continued the prosecution. But the indignation of the world was not without its effect even in Russia, and Beilis was acquitted.

THE Balkan wars seriously threatened the position of the Near Eastern Jews, large numbers of whom lived in the territories transferred from the Ottoman Empire to Rumania and Greece. The fighting itself brought them great suffering, which the AJC sought to alleviate by raising relief funds. In addition, they had reason to fear for their future in states with a past record of mistreatment of Jews within their borders. On behalf of the Committee, Louis Marshall pointed out that Rumania had completely disregarded the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin designed to protect the Jews within her territories, and that Greece's treatment of the Jews in her territory had not been good. He therefore urged that the peace treaties include provisions guaranteeing the civil and religious liberties of all the inhabitants of the Balkan countries. Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan gave his support to these proposals, but as the United States was not one of the powers taking part in the peace conference, he could only act indirectly. (The European powers directly involved answered the American representations by stating that the inclusion of such provisions seemed to them unnecessary, since all the countries in question had constitutional provisions giving the desired protection!)

The same problem was raised again, on a far larger scale, by the First World War. Well before the end of the war, the AJC had begun to plan for the inclusion of guarantees of minority rights in the peace

treaties. Meanwhile, efforts to secure united action by American Jews on the peace treaties had led to the organization of an American Jewish Congress, in which the American Jewish Committee participated on condition that the Congress would be strictly limited in its purposes and would disband when these had been accomplished. Marshall officially represented the Congress at Versailles, but he wrote in 1923 that

. . . there was nothing but confusion at the Congress with regard to what should be said and what should not be said, on the subject of minority rights. More than a year before the Congress was held the American Jewish Committee had formulated its views on the subject. Seven committees, as I recollect it, were appointed by the Congress to deal with the subject of Jewish rights in the various countries of Europe, one committee for Russia, one for Poland, one for Galicia, one for Roumania, etc. Not a single one of these committees had an idea as to what was desirable or what principles to advocate. I was appointed on the Russian Committee, as I recollect. The members of my committee had nothing to suggest. I was called to New York, and when I returned, after a day's absence, I found that everything was at a standstill. I then suggested that the seven committees should sit together as one, and at a session which lasted almost an entire night I presented the program which I had prepared and which was accepted with the amendment, to which I acquiesced, in which a demand was to be made for national rights. I presented the report to the Congress. It was adopted by acclamation and with enthusiasm. That is the history of the American Jewish Congress with regard to minority rights.

I was not a candidate for appointment as a member of the delegation which the Congress was to send to Paris. I spoke to nobody on the subject, but I was chosen. I can say . . . that if the American Jewish Congress did not desire to send me as a delegate, I would have gone to Paris as the representative of the American Jewish Committee, which had given careful study to the problem for years, which knew what it was about, and had an idea of how to accomplish what had been agreed upon. . . .

THERE were two points of view represented among the Jewish groups which had delegations at Versailles. Marshall, named as chairman of the joint Comité des Delegations Juives which was set up in Paris, tried to reconcile the two. On the one hand some of the East European groups

sought recognition of the Jews as a "nationality" in the fullest sense. On the other, the Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Anglo-Jewish Association were opposed to any consideration of the Jews as an ethnic group: they wished to concentrate on securing general guarantees of religious, civic, and cultural rights. Marshall, however, had agreed at the Congress to a resolution calling for "national" rights because he believed that this concept was deeply embedded in the mores of Eastern Europe, though he never interpreted it in the way that many of the Eastern European delegates did. Above all, he did not believe that Jews *in general* could be regarded as an ethnic group, even though in the specific circumstances of Eastern Europe it might be appropriate to treat them as such. In the event no guarantees of "national" rights for Jews were written into the treaties. But largely through Marshall's influence with the American delegation, and the influence of the Alliance with the French and the Anglo-Jewish Association with the British representatives, the treaties did guarantee the rights of cultural and religious minorities in very much the terms in which Marshall had drafted them. These provisions were designed to protect the rights of *all* minorities, and not merely of Jews. In 1921, Marshall wrote to Isaac W. Frank:

If you will read these treaties, you will find that they practically write into the Constitutions of these new States the same guaranties of human rights and liberties that are the distinctive feature of our American Constitutions. Recognizing the fact that, in 1878, when a similar result was sought to be accomplished by the Berlin Treaty, Roumania was enabled, because of the unfortunate translation of the treaty, to evade its provisions, care was taken to define what citizenship meant and who was entitled to the rights of citizenship. In order to provide a remedy in the case of the violation of the treaties, clauses were inserted which made it possible to bring to the attention of an international court any complaints with regard thereto, that the terms of the treaties might be enforced. These provisions of the treaties were regarded as matters of international obligation, thus creating a new principle of international law, all calculated to be for the advantage and benefit of the common community. . . .

This point I wish you to remember, that we were not asking for any rights for the Jews that we were not anxious to have accorded to

any other minorities. We were dealing with minorities, not with our people. The only reference to the Jews in the treaties was with regard to the subject of Sabbath observance, as to which limited rights were conferred and which are entirely free from reasonable objection. . . .

The existence of the minority treaties undoubtedly served as some protection for human rights in Eastern Europe. Unfortunately, however, it was never an adequate one. Anti-Semitism and chauvinism remained powerful forces in such countries as Poland and Rumania, and treaty provisions were to a considerable extent evaded or nullified. The enforcement mechanism, which functioned through the Council of the League of Nations, was not too effective at best, and it was severely handicapped by the absence of the United States, the country most interested in the principle of the protection of minority rights. Moreover, the circumstances of European politics were not favorable to the enforcement of the minority treaties; in particular, the countries which were the most consistent violators of those treaties were allied to France, and that country therefore sought to protect them against any international intervention.

HENCE the American Jewish Committee frequently found it necessary, in the years after the First World War, to intervene on behalf of the Jews of Eastern Europe through other channels. On the whole, the United States government could give little help in protecting the rights of the Jews of Eastern Europe, since it was unable to protest officially against violations of treaties which it had sponsored, but never ratified. It was, however, possible to accomplish something by means of direct contact with the representatives of the East European governments, combined with diligent efforts to keep American public opinion informed. On a number of occasions, pledges were received from representatives of the Polish and Rumanian governments, and excesses were checked. But no amount of negotiation could stop the rising power of the Iron Guard in Rumania, and the anti-Semitic crimes which accompanied it.

Moreover, this period saw the development of a new anti-Semitic force more dangerous than any which had preceded it:

that of German Nazism. Recognizing the menace that Hitler presented, the American Jewish Committee gave substantial assistance to the central organization of German Jews in its struggle against anti-Semitism in that country, and it sought to stimulate American awareness of the danger. After Hitler came to power, the Committee continued these efforts. But both in the case of East European and of Nazi anti-Semitism, the AJC was reluctant to participate in mass protest activities of Jews *as Jews*—particularly in demonstrations, boycotts, and similar spectacular steps—which it felt might invite reprisals against the helpless Jewish communities concerned. This position was in accord with the desires of the chief representative organizations of the Jews of Rumania and Germany.

Particularly after the Nazis had come to power, this policy was challenged by other Jewish groups, who expressed the widespread desire in the American Jewish community to "fight back" against Nazism with whatever means were available. The Committee, for its part, felt that the most effective way of fighting international anti-Semitism was to mobilize the support of the American people as a whole against the violations of human rights involved; toward this end, it actively encouraged non-denominational and interfaith groups, such as the National Conference of Christians and Jews. In retrospect, it seems unlikely that anything the Jews of America were able to do—whether by mass demonstrations or by less spectacular methods—could have blocked or significantly tempered the Nazi persecution of the Jews. There can be little doubt, however, that the educational work of the Committee contributed substantially to American public understanding of the evil of Hitlerism.

The problem of Jewish refugees from anti-Semitism was, unfortunately, one with a long history. Indeed, it had been largely responsible for the mass immigration of Eastern European Jews to the United States in the first decade of the present century. But the problem had been complicated by this country's adoption of highly restrictive immigration policies in the period after the First World War; particularly severe restrictions were applied to the countries where the endangered Jewish population was

largest. When the passage of the United States Immigration Act of 1924 had left some ten thousand Jews stranded en route, barred by the quota system despite their possession of valid visas, the Committee played an active part in securing their admission to other countries, notably Canada. Now it appealed to the United States government and to the League of Nations to help find new homes for the refugees from Nazi persecution, actual or imminent. (Because of the high German quota, a relatively large part of the Jews from Germany itself who wanted to emigrate to the United States before 1938 were eventually able to secure admission; the situation was much worse for the hundreds of thousands who were caught by the Nazi seizure of Austria and Czechoslovakia, and for the millions in other Central and East European nations who could only wait helplessly while the Nazi menace grew). The United States government promised that its consulates would give all possible consideration to refugees, a promise not always carried out, but did nothing to alter the restrictive immigration laws. It did, however, join with the League in setting up the autonomous office of the High Commissioner. But despite the untiring, devoted efforts of the High Commissioner, James G. McDonald, it was possible to make only a little headway in the increasingly urgent task of finding new countries of settlement for the actual and imminent victims of Nazism.

UNDER these circumstances, Jews began to think increasingly of Palestine as a possible place of Jewish settlement. The American Jewish Committee had never been favorably inclined toward political Zionism, but it had always recognized that many Jews might wish to settle in Palestine and supported their right to do so. As early as 1913, the Committee had protested against Turkish regulations designed to limit Jewish access to Palestine, and through the intervention of the United States government it had secured the revocation of the requirement for a special permit from the Turkish government for American Jews wishing to go there. During the war, it had raised relief funds for the hard-pressed Palestinian Jews and transmitted them to Ambassador Henry Morgenthau, Sr.

in Constantinople. It had hailed the Balfour Declaration, singling out for emphasis those parts of it which stated that the Declaration did not in any way detract from the rights of Jews in other countries, or of the people then living in Palestine.

The predominant attitude of the Committee at the time of the Mandate was well expressed by Louis Marshall when, in a letter to Isaac W. Frank, he wrote:

I am opposed to a Jewish State and shall always be. There is no likelihood that there ever will be a Jewish State in Palestine. There is, however, a strong possibility that, as a result of united action, an outlet may be found in Palestine for the persecuted and suffering Jews of Eastern Europe. There is no other outlet for them. The doors of Western Europe have been closed against them. Our recent immigration law indicates that the opportunities that in the past have been afforded them of reestablishing themselves in this country are to be taken away from them. . . . What objection can there be, therefore, to an effort to establish for them a home in the land of their fathers and to enable them by the aid of wholesome sentiment to build up the waste places of the Holy Land and to bring about a renaissance?

Marshall and other Committee leaders had been active from the beginning in raising funds to assist in the settlement and development of Palestine; Marshall had taken the lead in the establishment of the Palestine Economic Corporation, and had been active in behalf of the Hebrew University and the Technion.

The Mandate for Palestine contemplated the creation of a Jewish agency to cooperate with the British in developing the country. Temporarily, the World Zionist Organization was recognized as that agency, but it was to take steps to associate with its activities all Jews who were willing to assist in the establishment of a Jewish National Home. While not all Zionists were anxious to share control, Chaim Weizmann was sincerely desirous of securing the broadest possible measure of unity. Hence, after negotiations involving the Zionist Organization, an American Non-Zionist Conference under the chairmanship of Marshall, and other interested groups, an agreement was finally arrived at in 1929. The Jewish Agency was to include the non-Zionists, who were

to receive equal representation on its Council. But the arrangement did not work out in practice; while the nature of Zionist organizations determined the opinions of their representatives, "non-Zionist" organizations could and did include active and organizationally affiliated Zionists, and enough of these always were to be found among the representatives of ostensible non-Zionist groups to assure Zionist control of the Agency. When this control was used mechanically, it led to the gradual dropping out of the non-Zionist participants, including leading members of the American Jewish Committee.

Nevertheless, the Committee as an organization, and leading members of it as individuals, continued to take an active interest in Palestine. When, after the riots of 1936, a British Royal Commission proposed the partition of Palestine into a Jewish state, an Arab state, and an area under continued British administration, the January 1938 meeting of the Committee opposed this as a violation of the Mandate and urged that the latter be continued in its original form. The Committee also sought to forestall any limitation on Jewish immigration and settlement. When the British government nevertheless imposed severe limitations on Jewish immigration to Palestine and Jewish land acquisition there by the White Paper of May 1939, the Committee condemned this action as a violation of the Mandate and a blow at the refugees from Nazism. In the fight against the White Paper the Committee joined with other Jewish organizations, including Zionist groups, in protests to the British government and appeals to the United States to use its good offices for the restoration of the rights claimed under the Mandate.

An attempt to find a joint program on Palestine which both Zionists and non-Zionists could support failed when the Zionists, in 1942, adopted the "Biltmore Program" demanding an immediate Jewish State in all of Palestine. In January 1943, the Committee adopted a "Statement of Views" calling for cooperation between Arabs and Jews, safeguards for Jewish immigration and settlement to the full extent of Palestine's absorptive capacity, an international trusteeship safeguarding and protecting the fundamental rights of all inhabitants, and

preparation of the country to become a self-governing Commonwealth "within a reasonable period of years" and under a constitution guaranteeing the rights of all. Later in the same year, the difference between these two positions resulted in the Committee's withdrawal from the American Jewish Conference after the Zionists in control of the latter organization insisted on adoption of the full Biltmore program.

DURING the war the Committee sought to do what little could be done to secure the rescue of Jews from Nazi-occupied territories, through warnings from the United States and its allies and through the intercession of neutrals. After the Allied occupation of North Africa, the Committee was instrumental in securing the reinstatement of the Crémieux Decree granting French citizenship to Algerian Jews, which had been revoked by the Vichy regime. Together with other Jewish groups, it asked and obtained the extension of UNRRA's activities to include all victims of Nazism, whatever their nationality. And it established an Institute on Peace and Postwar Problems to examine the questions which would require solution when the fighting was over. The Institute produced a large number of studies on the problems of various specific countries of Central and Eastern Europe, and on more general topics relating to the future of Europe's Jews. And, in line with its historic emphasis on the importance of international guarantees of human rights, it sponsored Professor Hersh Lauterpacht's study, *An International Bill of the Rights of Man*.

When the San Francisco Conference of the United Nations met in April 1945, the Committee had placed its proposals for international protection of human rights in the hands of the various delegates. It had also secured widespread support from Americans of all faiths, as shown by a statement issued by 1,326 distinguished Americans in December 1944, calling for the creation of an international bill of rights. In 1919 the Committee had sought the inclusion of provisions in the peace treaties guaranteeing specific rights to minorities, as a step in the extension of general human rights. Now experience had convinced it of the inadequacy of provisions designed merely to deal with special situations; violations of human

rights could occur anywhere in the world and threaten not merely those immediately affected but the peace of all, as they had in the case of Nazi Germany. Persecuted minorities could come into existence overnight at the whim of a dictator.

At the conference itself, Judge Joseph Proskauer and Jacob Blaustein, then respectively president and chairman of the Executive Committee of the AJC, served as consultants to the American Delegation. In this capacity they concentrated their efforts on securing inclusion of guarantees of human rights in the United Nations Charter. At their initiative, all the non-governmental consultants of the American delegation met jointly with Secretary of State Stettinius to urge his support of such guarantees. The result was that the American delegation undertook the sponsorship of the human rights provisions, which were subsequently included in the Charter. While the Charter contains no adequate provision for the enforcement of these rights, their presence in it has served as a basis for UN consideration of violations of human rights in various parts of the world.

To further advance the cause of human rights, and to deal with other problems before the UN, the Committee joined with the Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Anglo-Jewish Association in establishing the Consultative Council of Jewish Organizations, which has consultant status at the UN. Through it, the committee has continued to work with the various UN bodies dealing with human rights in an effort to secure the amplification and implementation of the guarantees in the Charter. It has actively supported the adoption of the International Declaration of Human Rights, participated in the effort to develop a Covenant of Human Rights, and worked for the acceptance of the Genocide Convention. No agreement has been reached on a Covenant of Human Rights. And while the Genocide Convention has received the endorsement of the United Nations, the United States State Department, fearing protests from certain Senators against "surrendering U.S. sovereignty," has refused to submit it to the Senate for ratification.

In addition, the Committee felt that it was important to secure special provision for human rights in the peace treaties with

certain of the defeated countries. It believed that, on the basis of past performances, human rights in these countries stood in particular need of international protection. Moreover, if a system of international guarantees for human rights in these states could be established and made to work, the Committee hoped that it might then be the more readily accepted by the rest of the world. These proposals were advanced by the Committee in a monograph on "Human Rights in the Peace Treaties," and were submitted by a Committee delegation to the representatives of the great powers meeting in Paris to draw up the treaties. Human rights provisions, closely following the Committee's proposals, were in fact included in the Rumanian and Hungarian treaties—but without provision for their international enforcement. Unfortunately, therefore, they have in practice served principally as a basis for Western protests at the violation of human rights in the countries in question, rather than as a real protection for those rights.

WITH the close of the war, the related questions of refugees and Palestine again came to the fore, together with the problem of rebuilding the Jewish communities shattered by the war and Nazi terror. Together with the Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Anglo-Jewish Association, the AJC sponsored a conference of Jewish organizations from thirteen countries, which met in London in February 1946 in order to examine the problems and consider methods for their solution. On the basis of information gained at the conference, the Committee was enabled to assist the various European communities in meeting some of their most pressing needs. The Committee worked actively to expand the opportunities for resettlement of the victims of Nazism, and the increasing flood of those who fled the Communist despotisms of Eastern Europe. At its instance, the United States government in 1945 appointed Judge Simon Rifkind as a special advisor to the military authorities in Germany on problems relating to displaced Jews. In 1946, when there was grave danger that the United States would close the borders of its zone of Germany to further refugees from Eastern Europe, representatives of Jewish organizations under

the chairmanship of Jacob Blaustein secured assurances from the State Department and the army that the borders would remain open.

The Committee also established an office in Paris which gave valuable assistance to the European communities in dealing with such problems as the restitution of property seized by the Nazis and development of interfaith cooperation in the fight against anti-Semitism. The Paris office launched a magazine in French, *Evidences*, which served as a forum for the discussion of problems of interest to European Jews and helped in rebuilding their cultural life.

All of the Committee's work in Europe aimed at helping the Jews of Europe to reconstruct their individual and communal lives, or if they so desired, to rebuild their lives elsewhere. This work had many aspects. Since only a democratic society could genuinely assure the rights of Jews or anyone else, the Committee regarded the fight for a democratic Europe as one of its primary tasks. In this connection, it sought to combat both the remnants of Nazi ideology and the inroads of Communist totalitarianism. Through the Paris office and through special representatives sent from the United States, it took an active part in combating neo-Nazi tendencies and encouraging democratic forces in Germany. It helped to establish interfaith groups to fight racism and intolerance in numerous German cities. At the same time, it sought to make known the facts about the persecution of Jews and other groups in the Soviet sphere. COMMENTARY and *Evidences* published many articles on the subject; information was collected from Jewish refugees from the countries of Eastern Europe, as well as from other sources, and published; and two comprehensive volumes, *The Jews in the Soviet Union*, by Solomon M. Schwarz, and *The Jews in the Soviet Satellites*, by Peter Meyer, Bernard D. Weinryb, and others, were prepared and published under the Committee's auspices.

IN ORDER to help the Jews who wished to remain in Europe reestablish themselves on a sound basis, the Committee was also active in securing restitution legislation in the various countries. It was particularly instrumental in obtaining the passage of restitu-

tion and indemnification laws in the states of the American zone of Germany during the Allied occupation of that country, and in the subsequent adoption of similar legislation by the German Federal Republic.

But the Committee felt that Germany had a more general obligation to assist in the rehabilitation of the Jewish victims of Nazism, and joined with other Jewish groups in establishing the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany. Throughout the long-drawn-out negotiations between this group and the German government, AJC representatives took a leading part. On more than one occasion when the negotiations seemed on the verge of collapse, obstacles were removed through the intervention of Jacob Blaustein with President Truman, the State Department, and United States High Commissioner John J. McCloy. Committee representatives played a similar role in bringing the extremely difficult negotiations with the Austrian government on the questions of restitution and indemnification to an at least partially satisfactory conclusion. They also participated actively in the efforts of the Claims Conference, which are still continuing, to distribute the available resources most effectively from the point of view of the rehabilitation and advancement of the European Jewish communities.

The work of the AJC in these fields contributed to the improvement of the position of the West European Jewish communities in the period between the London Conference of 1946 and a second conference which took place in London in 1954, under the auspices of the AJC, the Alliance Israélite Universelle, and the Anglo-Jewish Association. Because of this improvement, and the fact that the immediate political and economic problems which had beset the communities at the time of the earlier conference had been largely solved, the second conference was called the "Conference of Hope."

The war and postwar period also saw a marked increase in the Committee's work in Latin America. In part, this was due to the need for finding new homes for Jews who had to leave Europe; in part, it was occasioned by the increasing problems which faced the expanding Latin American Jewish communities. In Argentina, center of one

of the largest Jewish communities in the world, the Committee established its South American office. In its Latin American work the AJC sought to aid the various Jewish communities in integrating themselves into the life of their countries while preserving and expanding their cultural and religious activities.

It assisted in the establishment of the Argentine Jewish Institute for Culture and Information and of the Institute's magazine *Commentario*. With the help of the AJC, a similar organization was subsequently established in Brazil. The Committee also published a bulletin in Yiddish and Spanish for the use of community leaders, as well as periodic studies of particular problems. On a number of occasions the Committee intervened successfully with various Latin American governments against discriminatory measures and in favor of freer immigration.

THE existence of hundreds of thousands of displaced Jews at the end of the war, and the difficulty of finding lands of settlement for them, sharply increased the pressure for Jewish immigration to Palestine. But the limited immigration permitted by Great Britain under the terms of the White Paper and its subsequent modifications only met a fraction of the need. In August 1945 President Truman wrote to Prime Minister Attlee urging the admission of 100,000 displaced Jews to Palestine, a request which the AJC strongly supported. The subsequent negotiations between the United States and Great Britain resulted in the appointment of the Joint Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on Palestine. Testifying before the Anglo-American Committee as president of the AJC, Judge Proskauer offered recommendations based largely on the 1943 Statement of Views. He asked for the revocation of the White Paper and the immediate admission to Palestine of 100,000 displaced Jews and the establishment of a United Nations Trusteeship for the purpose of "safeguarding the Jewish settlement in and Jewish immigration into Palestine, as well as to help in preparing Palestine to become a self-governing, independent and democratic commonwealth."

The unanimous report of the Anglo-American Committee accorded in large part

with the AJC recommendations. It urged that the British Mandate be continued temporarily, to be converted as soon as possible into a trusteeship under the United Nations which would help the country to develop so that it might become "neither a Jewish state nor an Arab state," but one with equal rights for all its inhabitants. Judge Proskauer declared the report "a source of satisfaction to all fair-minded and right-thinking people" and fully endorsed the recommendations for immediate action. But, he said, "With respect to the ultimate recommendations, there will undoubtedly be differences of opinion." There were.

The Zionists condemned the recommendations, and so did the Arabs. President Truman again urged the immediate admission of 100,000 Jews, but did not commit himself on the other proposals. The British, on the other hand, refused to consider such admission apart from the entire plan, and without the disbandment of the various underground armies in Palestine and an American promise to take joint responsibility for the execution of the reforms. The British and American governments then set up a joint cabinet committee to review the problem once again. From this there emerged the Morrison-Grady Plan for a cantonal arrangement in Palestine; the plan met with the unanimous opposition of all Jewish and Arab groups, and was promptly disavowed by the United States government.

Meanwhile, the position of the Zionists had gradually shifted to the point where they were willing to accept the partition of Palestine in order to secure the immediate establishment of a state. In view of this development, and of the apparent impossibility of arriving at an agreed solution, the American Jewish Committee also altered its position. In September 1946 the Executive Committee of the AJC decided, in the words of Jacob Blaustein,

... that such a solution, though far from ideal, would in no way contravene the democratic principles for which the American Jewish Committee has always stood. This Partition Plan is a far departure from the Biltmore Resolution Plan, which would have meant a Jewish state comprising the whole of Palestine with a Jewish minority ruling the Arab majority. Under the Partition Plan, the Jewish section already has a preponderance of Jewish

population, and when thought of in terms of a Jewish state, it would be a Jewish state only in the same sense that the United States, with a preponderance of Christian population, might be termed a Christian state.

There appeared no other solution which would assure a haven in Palestine for the displaced Jews, whose numbers were rapidly mounting and whose morale was rapidly falling. Our Executive Committee agreed that, with so many human lives at stake, a quick practical compromise was preferable to continued search for ideal solutions.

At the request of the State Department, the AJC undertook to act as an intermediary between the Department and the Jewish Agency, keeping the Agency informed as to United States policy and presenting the Agency's position to the Department.

Meanwhile the situation in Palestine continued to deteriorate. On April 2, 1947, the British government placed the question before the General Assembly of the UN, which created the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP). In a brief submitted to UNSCOP, the AJC recommended the establishment of a United Nations trusteeship, the revocation of the White Paper and immediate admission of 100,000 Jews, subsequent facilitation of maximum Jewish immigration, and immediate placement of Jews and Arabs in positions of responsibility in preparation for ultimate self-government for Palestine with full equality of all its citizens. However, the Committee added that if an immediate political solution was desired, it would urge that Palestine be partitioned as proposed by the Jewish Agency. When the majority of UNSCOP recommended partition, while the minority called for the establishment of a bi-national state on a cantonal basis, the AJC supported the majority resolution.

The Committee was in constant communication with President Truman, Secretary of State Marshall, and other government officials during the period of the Assembly debate. After the adoption of the partition plan by the General Assembly and the development of Arab resistance to its implementation, the United States proposed the substitution of a temporary trusteeship. The AJC strongly opposed this change, and played an important role in persuading the government to return to its original position.

AFTER the establishment of the State of Israel and the conclusion of the armistice agreements, the Committee endeavored to explain the Israeli position to the American people and to secure favorable consideration from the government for Israel's political and economic interests. At the same time it urged the new state to make it completely clear that it spoke only for itself, and did not pretend to represent the Jews of the world or to have any claim on their political allegiance. This was particularly important because of the frequent recurrence of statements by some Zionist spokesmen which were open to other interpretations. For the same reason (as well as because of the element of discrimination involved) the Committee on a number of occasions indicated to Israeli officials its uneasiness over the provision of the Israeli Nationality Law conferring automatic citizenship on all Jews entering the country unless they specifically rejected it.

In August 1950 AJC President Jacob Blaustein visited Israel at the invitation of Prime Minister Ben Gurion. At the Committee's suggestion, Ben Gurion clarified the Israeli government's attitude as to its relation to the Jews of other countries in a statement in which he declared:

The Jews of the United States, as a community and as individuals, have only one political attachment and that is to the United States of America. They owe no political allegiance to Israel. In the first statement which the representative of Israel made before the United Nations after her admission to that international organization, he clearly stated, without any reservation, that the State of Israel represents and speaks only on behalf of its own citizens and in no way presumes to represent or speak in the name of the Jews who are citizens of any other country. We, the people of Israel, have no desire and no intention to interfere in any way with the internal affairs of Jewish communities abroad.

Ben Gurion reiterated this position in a letter to Jacob Blaustein in October 1956, clarifying certain statements which had been attributed to him in the Israel Year Book, and again in a statement to a delegation of the AJC headed by President Irving M. Engel, in June 1957.

The Committee frequently took up questions relating to Israel with both the Tru-

man and Eisenhower administrations. A series of discussions took place in 1950 between Jacob Blaustein, President Truman, Secretary of State Acheson, and Secretary of Defense Johnson, in regard to the threat posed to Israel by the arming of the various Arab states with Western assistance. The AJC took the position that, while it would be best if the flow of arms into the area were shut off altogether, Israel should be given arms if the Arabs were. These discussions contributed to the issuance of the Tripartite Declaration by the United States, Great Britain, and France, pledging support to any victim of aggression in the area. The Committee was also influential in securing economic assistance for Israel, through the Export-Import Bank, the Technical Assistance Program, and in other ways.

While the Committee was actively engaged in explaining Israel's problems to the American public, it also undertook to acquaint Israel with the questions raised in the minds of American Jews and others by certain of its policies. In addition to the Nationality Law and the relationship of Israel to Jews in other countries, the Committee discussed with Israeli officials the problems raised by the special position of Orthodox Judaism (and discriminatory treatment of Reform and Conservative Judaism) in Israel, as well as the treatment of the Arab minority. Thus the delegation headed by Irving M. Engel which visited Israel last summer, while disclaiming any intention of interfering in the internal affairs of Israel, pointed out to Israeli leaders that Israeli policies in these fields inevitably affected the position of Jews in other countries.

The AJC also sought in various ways to assist the Jews in Arab countries. It enlisted the good offices of the United States government to facilitate the emigration of those Jews in Arab states who wished to leave, while at the same time it sought to prevent or moderate discriminatory measures against those who remained. In 1949, when there was danger that Iran would close its borders to Jews emigrating from Iraq to Israel, AJC

President Jacob Blaustein conferred with the Iranian Shah and Prime Minister, who agreed to keep this escape route open. A Committee delegation consisting of Jacob Blaustein, Irving M. Engel, and John Slawson visited North Africa in 1954 on the eve of Tunisian and Moroccan independence to examine the implications of developments there for the Jews of those countries. The delegation sought to make sure that the hundreds of thousands of Jews living in these countries would be able to choose freely between remaining and participating in the national life on a basis of full equality, or emigrating freely and without suffering economic or other reprisals. The assurances it received from Tunisian and Moroccan nationalist leaders went far to remove any fears of discrimination by the new governments of those countries.

IN ADDITION to its direct activities in the international field, the Committee has played an important international role through its cultural and informational work. Thus the *American Jewish Year Book*, for which the Committee took editorial responsibility in 1907, has served to keep the various Jewish communities of the world informed on developments affecting all of them. COMMENTARY has devoted much of its space to the discussion of international issues. The Committee has sponsored studies in various fields which have contributed significantly to public understanding.

While the approach of the Committee to specific international problems has sometimes changed in the course of its half century of existence, its basic premise has remained constant: any attack on the rights of Jews threatens the rights of all men, and Jewish rights are best protected by the spread of democracy and respect for human rights everywhere. Like all human institutions, it has sometimes fallen short in practice of the high goals it has set itself. But its record of fifty years of humanitarian endeavor is a notable one, and Jews have not been the only ones to benefit from its accomplishments.